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REVIEW OF A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC BY THEATER LATTE' DA

Posted by Mary Aalgaard | Feb 14, 2019 | Play off the Page | 1 | ★★★★★



Quote of the Day: *A Little Night Music* is a “Story told in 3/4 time.” from Elissa Adams’ research on Sondheim’s sexy, sweet, complicated, and melancholy musical. I never truly understood the song *Send in the Clowns* until I heard Sally Wingert sing it. Now, I can’t get the melody nor its theme out of my head.

Love is complicated. It’s all about timing. Commitment is fickle. People have different dreams. *A Little Night Music* is both lovely and light and full of heartache and wistful moments. The score is divine. *Send in the Clowns* was an

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Sally Wingert as Desiree and Mark Benninghofen as Fredrik in Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* at Theater Latte' Da through March 10, 2019. Photo by Dan Norman

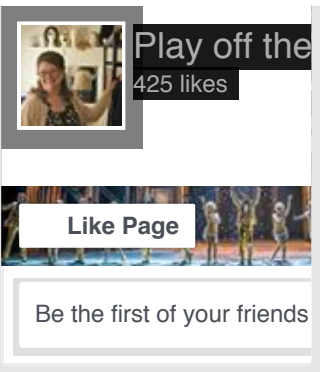
instant success and several artists have recorded it over the years as a stand alone. The lovely and talented Elizabeth Hawkinson who plays Countess Charlotte Malcolm and Grace Chermak who plays Anne Egerman sing the stinging and saucy song *Every Day a Little Death*. (Love brings pain, and men are selfish and

wandering.) Three songs in succession are titled *Now, Later*, and *Soon*. The theme of the love triangles runs throughout, and the overture is titled *Night Waltz*.

Scenic design by Joel Sass has a blend of indoors and outdoors. The piano is set in the marsh, reeds and weeds surrounding it. Indoors, the colors are muted, off-white, with a tinge of blue and lavender. In the first act, all the actors are dressed in off-white. In the second act, we see more color. Costume design by Rich Hamson is precisely coordinated. The whole experience is kind of dreamy.



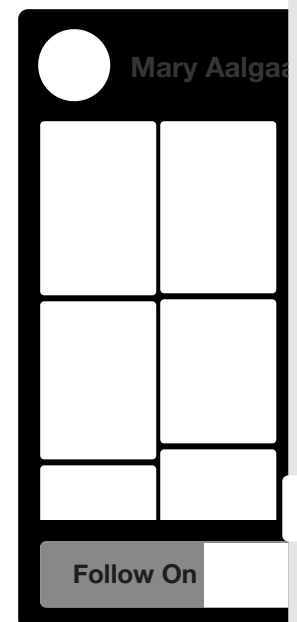
Cast and gorgeous set of *A Little Night Music* at Theater Latte' Da, through March 10, 2019. Photo by Dan Norman



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The plot line is a little silly. Old guy Fredrik Egerman (played smartly by Mark Benninghofen) has married a woman much younger than himself, Anne (Grace Chermak), who isn't even attracted to him. She's got her eye on his son Henrik (Riley McNutt). Henrik is trying to be pious but is easily swayed by the charms of Petra (Britta Ollmann). Desiree (Sally Wingert) has two lovers and artfully pushes them in and out of her dressing room and life, as needed. Desiree's mother Madame Leonora Armfeldt (Susan Hofflander) has a grand presence. And, the young Mabel Weismann as Fredrika is delightful.

All of the young ladies have lovely, sweet voices, hitting all the notes with purity and emotion. Bradley Greenwald who plays the servant Frid leaves us wanting one more song. Rodolfo Nieto's operatic bass sends shivers down your spine, despite the slimy character that he portrays, the wandering and egotistical Count Carl-Magnus Malcolm.

As the leading Lord and Lady of the theater, Sally Wingert and Mark Benninghofen, play so wonderfully off each other. They know how to get the core of a character and convey their purpose with commitment and charm, getting to the heart of the story and song with everything they've got. I can still hear them sing, "Isn't it grand? Are we a pair? Me here at last on the ground, you in midair. Where are the clowns? There ought to be clowns. Well, maybe next year."



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Rodolfo Nieto as Carl-Magnus, Sally Wingert as Desiree, and Elizabeth Hawkinson as Charlotte Malcolm in A Little Night Music at Theater Latte' Da. Photo by Dan Norman

Reading through the program, I learned more about Sondheim, his inspiration for this musical, and what it means to people. I agree with Director Peter Rothstein, that the song they cut, "Silly People," does most aptly sum up the play. I wish they had kept it in, and of course, hearing Bradley Greenwald sing it would have been a treat. The musicianship of the small ensemble is superb, lead by Jason Hansen. You make it sound both easy and complicated, masterfully played. Bravo!

As with most shows I see at **Theater Latte' Da**, I wish I could see it again. They've extended performances through March 10, 2019. Get your tickets soon. They're selling out most shows. Sondheim is as beautiful and complicated as love itself. Go, lose yourself in this dreamy world.

Go. Create. Inspire!

Journaling Prompt: *I'm posting this on Valentine's Day. Go ahead and write about romance, the good, the bad, and the ugly. And, send yourself some flowers or listen to your favorite music. I'm going to play "Send in the Clowns" on the piano, a song I learned many years ago, and sing, if only for an audience of one.*

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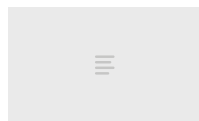
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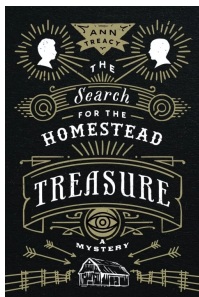
Mary Aalgaard writes theater reviews and supports the arts through her blog Play off the Page. She teaches youth theater workshops in the Brainerd lakes area, writes articles for regional magazines, and works with both seniors and youth in multi-generational programs to enhance quality of life and build community. You can follow her on her Play off the Page Facebook page, and @MaryAalgaard on Twitter.

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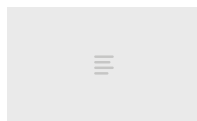
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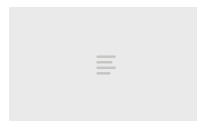
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Alex J. Cavanaugh on February 14, 2019 at 12:42 pm

Sets do look impressive!

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